

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please replace the claims, including all prior versions, with the listing of claims below.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A methodMethod for fabricating a semiconductor structure having the steps of, comprising:
 - providing a semiconductor substrate (10);
 - providing a plurality of trenches (G11, G12; G21) in the semiconductor substrate (10) using a first hard mask (50), which trenches are arranged offset with respect to one another in rows (r1, r2) and columns (s1, s2, s3);
 - causing the hard mask (50) to recede by a predetermined distance (Δ) with respect to thea trench wall at thea top side (OS) of the semiconductor substrate (10) for the purpose of forming a first hard mask (50') that has been caused to recede;
 - providing an isolation trench structure (ST) in the semiconductor substrate (10) using a second hard mask (HM), the isolation trench structure (ST) subdividing the first hard mask (50') that has been caused to recede along the rows (r1, r2) into strip sections (50₁', 50₂', 50₃') and the strip sections (50₁', 50₃') of adjacent rows (r1, r2) being arranged offset with respect to one another;
 - the receding process resulting in a reduction of an overlap region (KB') between two strip sections (50₁', 50₃') of adjacent rows (r1, r2) in comparison with an overlap region (KB) which would be present without the receding process;
 - removing the second hard mask (HM); and
 - filling and planarizing the isolation trench structure (ST) with a filling material (FI) using the first hard mask (50') subdivided into the strip sections (50₁', 50₂', 50₃');
2. (Currently amended) The methodMethod according to claim 1, characterized in thatwherein the trenches (G11, G12; G21) each have a trench capacitor with a corresponding filling (20), which is sunk with respect to the top side (OS) of the semiconductor substrate (10).

3. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to claim 1 or 2, characterized in thatwherein the receding process is realized by an isotropic, preferably wet-chemical, etching process, as a result of which ~~the~~^a thickness of the first hard mask (50_1) that has been caused to recede is reduced in comparison with ~~the~~^a thickness of the hard mask (50_1).
4. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to one of the preceding claims, characterized in thatclaim 1, wherein the first hard mask (50_1) is composed of silicon nitride.
5. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to one of the preceding claims, characterized in that claim 1, wherein the second hard mask (HM) is composed of silicon oxide.
6. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to one of the preceding claims, characterized in thatclaim 1, wherein the filling material (FI) is composed of silicon oxide.
7. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to one of the preceding claims, characterized in thatclaim 1, wherein the receding process results in complete elimination of an overlap region (KB) between two strip sections ($50_4'; 50_3'$) of adjacent rows ($r1, r2$).